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those who have had some college work and pass the entrance examination. Twenty hours a week are given to class work, and an equal number of hours to practice work in the branch libraries, this practice work being paid for at the rate of one-half the salary of the second grade, to which the graduates from the course are eligible.

The instruction in children's literature and methods of work with children is given by Miss Clara W. Hunt, superintendent of work with children; and for instruction in other subjects the students join the classes in the advanced course.

This special course is also open to assistants on the staff of the library who can meet the entrance requirements. Pass-cards are given for the various subjects as they are completed, and a certificate at the end.

Another feature of the plan is that the pass-card in any subject will be accepted in place of a promotion examination in that subject.

For promotion from the first to the second grade, or from the second to the third grade, two examinations are required; one technical, the other educational and bibliographical.

If an assistant has successfully covered either the technical or the bibliographic work in the advanced course, she will be excused from taking that part of the promotion examination.

This adds to the attractiveness of the plan for the assistants, as many of them dread an examination coming "out of a clear sky," as it were, much more than they do one following a definite course of study under an instructor.

As you see, the plan is intended primarily to benefit the Brooklyn Public Library; and we hope that it will do this in several ways:

1. It will give those entering the system an incentive to work for promotion

right from the start. Too often, the new assistant, having finished her entrance course and gained appointment, feels that she has arrived, and settles back without realizing that she has really only begun her work. The opportunity offered in this plan will tend to correct this attitude. If she is really a librarian at heart and has normal strength, she will either (if she is eligible) enter the advanced course, or (not being eligible) take some cultural courses of study outside to prepare herself for entrance.

2. It prepares assistants for promotion steadily and systematically.

3. By its offer of instruction according to professional standards, it will tend to hold on the staff all those who are working for the certificate.

4. It offers to the assistant who wishes for more extended knowledge of a particular branch of library work an opportunity for further study.

5. Indirectly, the library's service cannot help but be freshened and strengthened, kept "toned up" as it were, by this steady application of many on its staff to the acquiring of professional knowledge and the study of library problems.

6. It may probably attract to the library some women who feel an interest in library work but who cannot afford to take the time and spend the money, even for a one-year course, at a library school, but who would be glad to take such a course if, at the same time, they could be earning money and covering their expenses. If this occurs, the advanced course will open another avenue of approach to the profession for those who otherwise would be excluded from it. If professional standards are maintained, the course will then benefit not only its own library but the profession at large, whose need of trained workers is so great.

## A CLERICAL COURSE FOR LIBRARY ASSISTANTS

By BERTHA R. BARDEN, *Supervisor Apprentice Class, Public Library, Cleveland, Ohio*

Present conditions in library service are forcing more clearly upon us the distinction between library work which is purely clerical and that which is really professional in character. Necessity has shown that much of the routine work of the loan desks particularly, can be done by assistants with limited education and with no professional training, provided they are taught to do this special work. In a large library this

training can best be given in a class, where instruction can be systematic and uniform.

The object of this paper is to present the experience of the Cleveland Public Library in organizing the clerical course which has been given in addition to the regular apprentice course in the past two years.

Training in the apprentice classes in the Cleveland Public Library is given not as a preliminary to employment in the library,

but rather as a required part of the first year's work as an apprentice, and serves also as part of the compensation for the first year's service, since the course is taken on library time and no tuition is charged. In this library apprentices are paid at the rate of \$50.00 to \$65.00 per month, according to their previous preparation and experience. The appointment of apprentices to the regular library service with the rank of "library assistant" is conditioned upon the successful completion of the full apprentice course together with the year's work as an apprentice, and the passing of an examination in literature, history and general information, which may be taken before or after the apprentice course.

The course for clerical workers is an outgrowth of the regular apprentice class, brought about by various conditions, particularly the number of apprentices to be trained and the difference in their educational qualifications and ability.

In 1917, with the increased loss of assistants in the lower grades of service, came the necessity of filling their places with apprentices. As a result, in both 1917 and 1918 there were about forty-five apprentices to enter the apprentice class. The educational background of these students varied from less than a full high school course to a full college course. It was obvious also that some apprentices were best fitted for clerical positions and needed instruction especially related to the work they were doing, while they were not qualified to do passing work in the bibliographic courses. It was decided, therefore, to divide the class and give to those qualified only for clerical work a shorter course, including mainly technical subjects, which would give the information most immediately useful. The short course classes have been made up largely of students who have had no more and frequently less than a high school education. The examinations in literature, history, etc., are of course not required of apprentices in the clerical course.

This short apprentice course, as it has been given so far, consists of twenty-five lectures, given in fifteen half-day periods, or one morning a week for about three

months. The schedule is so arranged that some lectures of a general nature, not requiring practice work, are given at one time to students in the full course and short course, thus saving the time of the lecturer. The technical subjects are given in two courses: one in loan work; the other, called for want of a better term catalog records, including the arrangement of books on the shelves, the meaning of call numbers and accession numbers, and the use of the catalog and shelf list. These courses cover the same ground as in the full apprentice course, so that students who pass the short course satisfactorily can be given credit for this part of the full course when they are ready to take it. In addition to this instruction in library records a few lectures on the work of the library in general are given, and one lecture on books and reading has been included for the purpose of stimulating a desire for more and better personal reading. Practice in library handwriting is required, and an examination on the work of the course is given.

The loan work course consists of eleven lectures, six devoted to the records of the loan desk and accompanied by class practice work, and five dealing with the broader phases of loan work, such as the spirit of the loan department, qualifications of assistants, and the reasons for rules and regulations. Since the majority of students taking the apprentice courses are assigned to positions requiring desk work, this course includes sufficient detail to give an understanding of all the records involved, which, supplemented by regular work wherever the apprentices are assigned, will enable them to develop more rapidly into efficient desk assistants.

The purpose of the catalog records course is to teach students to make intelligent use of the shelf arrangement and records of books. It consists of nine lectures with practice problems in using the catalog and shelf list and in alphabetizing. No attempt is made to teach students to classify, catalog, or even to accession and shelf list books, since the comparatively few apprentices who are assigned to work in the catalog department as typists and shelf listers, learn

to do this special work under supervision. The apprentice class training serves as a general introduction to such record work.

The results of this clerical course thus far evident may be summarized as follows:

1. It has given a general knowledge of the library records, together with some information about the library as a whole, to a group of clerical assistants whose educational qualifications will hardly permit them to advance to the regular library service, but whose work is necessary to the library and should be recognized as a clerical grade of service. Such clerical positions are those of desk assistants at the main library and branches, typists in the catalog department, and certain assistants in the offices of the stations department, bindery department and the order department.

2. It is a test of the apprentice's usefulness to the library, since students who cannot pass this course have, as a rule, proved to be unfitted for even clerical positions. An exception to this are the foreign girls, who are valuable to the library because of their knowledge of a foreign language, but sometimes so handicapped by difficulty with English that it is necessary to take these technical courses a second time in order to pass them. In such cases the short course frequently serves as introductory to the full apprentice course, in which the technical courses are taken over again.

3. The short course, which usually begins in January, also serves as part of the full course in cases where apprentices come into the library after the beginning of the full course in October, thus enabling new apprentices to begin their training without waiting until the next year. In other cases, for different reasons, apprentices may be advised to begin with the short course and later on, after additional outside study and reading, complete the full course. Of the first class of eighteen, five have been taking the full course this year and three will complete it.

Whether the clerical course should be a longer and more comprehensive one is a question to be considered from the standpoint of both the student and the library. Would more subjects of study, which may not be related to the work which the apprentice is doing, be of value to her in her work? This problem is already apparent in the case of assistants in the catalog department to whom the loan work course is always more difficult and for whom special practice work at the loan desk has to be arranged. More attention might be given to training for speed and accuracy, but this should be in connection with the technical courses now included. On the side of the library, the number of apprentices who stay in the library only a short time after completing the course, raises the question as to whether the library would be justified in putting any more time and effort into the class. Out of the first class of eighteen, six have left. Students who are ambitious and promising are given the opportunity to take the longer course whenever they can be recommended for it.

A clerical course for assistants in a library might be called the junior high school grade of training for library work. Is there not a grade of library work for which such training is sufficient? If the clerical course is to be more than simply a preliminary to further training, a clerical grade of service must be developed, in which skill in record work shall be recognized by salaries which will hold clerical workers trained by the library in its own service, rather than preparing them for better positions in some business office.

#### THE TRAINING OF ASSISTANTS FOR LENDING DEPARTMENT WORK

By JOSEPHINE A. RATHBONE, *Vice-Director, School of Library Science, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, N. Y.*

When asked to speak on the circulation department from the point of view of the library school, I was more than glad to accede to the request, for though the school I represent has always emphasized and even exalted the work of the circulation department, I realized that I

had never really investigated just what preparation the students themselves found they had gotten from the school. I knew that the fiction seminar was planned to meet the needs of the desk assistant and the course in book selection is also planned partly to increase her book knowl-